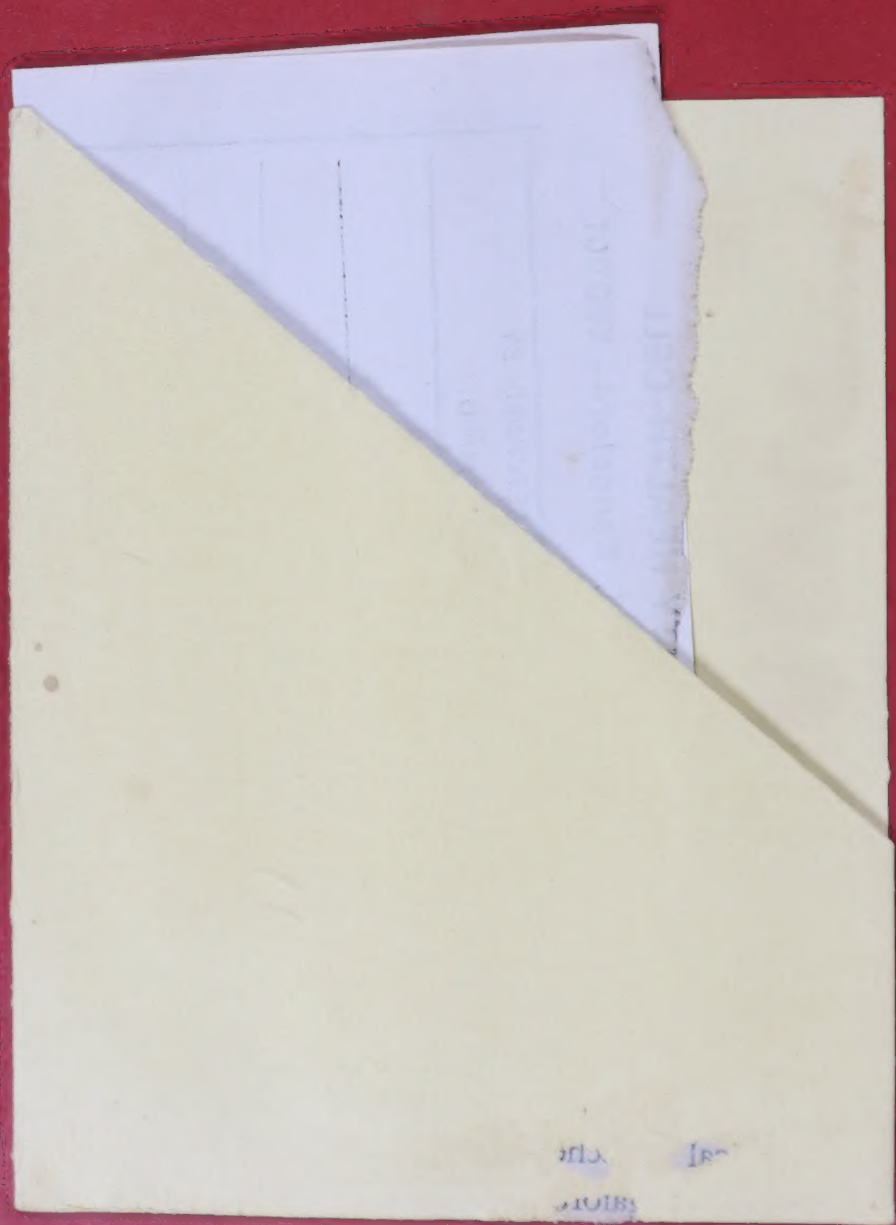


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THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

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For many Christians this sacrament is one that may easily be left aside without causing much harm to their christian life. Some show this by explicitly questioning the need of this sacrament while others receive it because it is one of the solemn ceremonies of the Church, without, however, feeling the need for such a sacrament in their lives. The main problem, therefore, with regard to this sacrament, is to find out the exact place which it occupies in the whole sacramental system. Hence our main concern will be the solution of this problem; we shall do this by dealing with the following aspects of the sacrament of Confirmation.

1. The sacrament of Confirmation in the past.
2. The main elements for a renewal of the theology of Confirmation.
3. The role of the Holy Spirit in the Economy of salvation.
4. The Liturgy of Confirmation, an expression of the Church, a Community of the Spirit:
 - a) History of the celebration of Confirmation.
 - b) The liturgy of Confirmation today.
5. The distinction between Baptism and Confirmation.
6. The effects of the sacrament of Confirmation.
7. Some pastoral problems connected with this sacrament:
 - a) The age for Confirmation.
 - b) The catechesis of Confirmation.
 - c) The liturgical preparation for the celebration of the sacrament.

I THEOLOGY AND HISTORY

1. The sacrament of Confirmation in the Past

The general trend in sacramental Theology with the emphasis on the sacraments as 'instruments of grace' had its effect also in the sacrament of Confirmation. The specificity and difference of the sacrament from the other sacraments was determined by the so-called 'sacramental grace' that is proper to it. Modern theology, instead, with its stress on sacraments as events of salvation, insists on their character as 're-enactment of salvation history' and therefore the differentiation of the sacraments will be primarily determined by the signs.

Naturally, this does not mean that grace plays no part in this new theology. The grace that is specific to the sacrament is discerned by the different sign which in its turn signifies and makes present a particular aspect of the history of salvation in the lives of those who participate in the celebration of the sacrament. The new theology must, therefore, show not so much what specific grace is produced by the sacrament of Confirmation, as what particular aspects of salvation history is re-enacted.

We all know that theology is the reflection on the life of the Church. In the case of the sacraments, this life is the liturgical celebration. This is very evident in the theology of the sacrament of Confirmation through the centuries. The patristic theology of Confirmation was evolved in the context of the theology of the sacraments of initiation. The early practice of celebrating the three sacraments of Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist made the theologians of the early church consider the sacrament of Confirmation always in its relation to the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. Later on, the liturgical practice changed; the celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation was separated from that of Baptism and the Eucharist. This change, however, was not motivated by a very profound theological consideration; it was necessitated by a practical or rather pragmatic situation, namely the lack of availability of the Bishops coupled with the insistence in the Western Church that the celebration of this sacrament could be done only by the Bishop. Even in this changed liturgical situation, the relationship of Confirma-

tion with the other sacraments of initiation was never completely denied, although there was already a tendency to evolve a theology of Confirmation, independently of the sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist. But a prolonged liturgical practice made the theologians lose sight of the place of Confirmation in the sacraments of initiation and as a consequence, we have a theology which does not give sufficient importance to the relationship of this sacrament to the other sacraments of initiation. In the new theology this is to a certain extent remedied by placing it once again in the context of the sacraments of initiation.

The theology of Confirmation in the past seems to have stressed too much the defensive and apologetic aspects of our Christian commitment and as a consequence the ecclesial dimension did not receive the importance that it ought to have received. It is necessary today to make a re-evaluation of the effect of the sacrament in terms not so much of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, as of the person of the Holy Spirit Himself, who animates the Church.

Finally the theology of Confirmation seems to have been moving along the lines of religious anthropology and not those of Christian anthropology; that is, the sacrament of Confirmation was considered as a help to fulfil the religious obligations of man and not as a sign by which the Christian was gradually manifesting his insertion in the risen Christ. Hence, there cannot be an adequate theology of the sacrament without placing it in the centre of the Paschal Mystery of Christ which is the source of all relationship of man with God in the new economy of salvation.

2. The main elements for a renewal of the theology of Confirmation

a) The History of Salvation is the realisation of the divine plan. This realisation has its beginning in creation and will reach its perfection at the Parousia. The Spirit is active in the world as the power of God that realises it. He was active in a special way in Christ in whom this divine design reached the climax of its realisation. He is active today in the Church in every member of Christ, in order that in every one of us He may bring to fulfilment what was perfectly realised in Christ, and thus hasten the final transforma-

tion of the world. In the sacrament of Confirmation we receive the Spirit of Christ for this purpose. Hence the special place of the sacrament of Confirmation in the life of the Church can be understood only by a careful examination of the role of the Holy Spirit in the history of salvation.

b) Both the history of Liturgy and the story of the evolution of dogma clearly show the intimate connection between Baptism and Confirmation on the one hand and the Eucharist and Confirmation on the other.

Hence a correct theology of Confirmation cannot be evolved unless we show the close relationship that exists between the sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation and between the sacraments of Confirmation and Eucharist.

c) The Spirit that is received is the Spirit of the risen Christ. Hence it is necessary to show the relationship between the sacrament of Confirmation and Paschal Mystery.

d) The differentiation based on sacramental grace reflects a sacramental theology based on the unity of the sacraments which in its run is based on the unity of the Church. The individual sacraments must be found within this unity. We must see the inter-relationship among the sacraments rather than their distinctiveness which springs from an excessive preoccupation to preserve the number seven. Within this general unity of the sacramental system we can still distinguish particular unities of the sacraments: sacraments of initiation, sacraments of healing, sacraments of growth.

3. The role of the Holy Spirit in the Economy of Salvation

A theology of Confirmation calls for the theology of the Holy Spirit. Now the knowledge of the Spirit will not be complete unless we know:

- a) What He is in the Holy Trinity
- b) What He is for us

A) **The Spirit in the Holy Trinity:** The relationship between the Father and Son acquires dynamism through the Spirit. The mutual knowledge of the Father and the Son becomes a loving recognition through the Spirit. The mutual

presence of the Father and the Son to one another becomes self-gift to one another through the Spirit. Since through Baptism we have entered into the trinitarian family, the Spirit perfects our participation in the life of the Son and thus directs us to the Father, the transcendent and immanent source of life and salvation. The Spirit consummates the work of the Father in Christ, by leading us through Christ to the Father. He takes us out of ourselves in the act of bearing witness. Such a testimony is more than the techniques of the apostolate, of government or organisation.

It comprises the whole range of mysterious influences (consolation, peace, persuasion, love etc.), which flow out from the human person in its own authenticity and in its profound solidarity with the others. The personal relationships are purified, intensified and entirely transformed through the power of the Spirit who unites us all in his communion. But the dimensions of 'for others' is dialectically inseparable from that of our being 'in ourselves'. Hence the grace of the Spirit is a constantly growing 'interiorization' and an 'exteriorisation'. Holy Spirit is not some neutral force; but He is a revealing, liberating, challenging person, to whom some response, be it positive or negative is unavoidable.

4. The Holy Spirit in the History of salvation

When this response is exteriorised and when it acquires an historical dimension, we have the history of salvation. Then the Holy Spirit becomes the maker of the History of Salvation. We shall now see how He acts in history.

The Spirit of God is not presented in the O.T. as a divine Person. It is the power of God that manifests itself as the cosmic energy stirring the universe into existence (Gen. 1, 2) and animating the human being (Jb. 27, 3). This action of the Spirit communicates God's own life and not any kind of existence. It is the Spirit that carries out the saving design of God. When the salvific intervention enters into the phase of history, that is, when it works towards the formation of the messianic people, we find the spirit active in those persons who become the instruments of God. Thus we see that the Judges (Judg. 3, 10-11; 14, 6), the Kings

(1 Sam. 10, 1-6, 13) and the prophets (Is. 8, 11; Jer. 1, 9-15; 17-20; Is. 61, 1-3) receive the Spirit in the beginning of their ministry and the Spirit remained with them as long as they served as instruments of God's saving design for the people. They were able in the power of the Spirit to liberate the people from external dangers (the judges), to give them internal, political unity (Kings) and spiritual unity (the prophets). The Messiah in whom all these ministries are to be concentrated is presented as one who comes into existence and acts, fully moved by the Spirit of God (Is. 11, 1-10; 42, 1-7).

In the fulness of time, the salvific intervention of God reaches its climax in the Incarnation. The very existence of the God-Man is caused by the Spirit; He is born of the Holy Spirit. At Jordan, the messianic mission of Christ is officially proclaimed by His anointing with the Holy Spirit. The whole life of the Messiah is lived under the impulse of the Spirit. He preaches and works miracles in the power of the Spirit. (Luke 4, 16-21; Acts 10, 38). The Resurrection of Christ is the perfect manifestation of this saving work of the Holy Spirit in the person of Christ (Rom, 8, 11). Finally the work of redemption, realised in Christ acquires its universal dimension at Pentecost which is the outpouring of the Spirit of Christ. All those who continue the ministry of Christ are working under the influence of this Pentecostal gift. The life-giving Word of God which came into the world (John 1, 1-14), fulfils today its mission through the power of the Spirit of Christ, the risen Lord. When one receives the sacrament of Confirmation, he becomes a sharer in the Pentecostal event and thus an efficacious instrument in making the Word of God operative in the world. The specificity of the sacrament of Confirmation consists, therefore, in the fact that those who receive this sacrament become specially committed to the spread of Divine life and thus contribute to the building up of the people of God. The Christian who is confirmed shares in the messianic life of Christ. He enters into the stream of life-giving actions meant for the gradual realisation of the eschatological urge which is characteristic of the Church and of the Christian. He receives the Spirit with His infinite potentiality to penetrate and transform the whole of the existing reality.

5. The Liturgy of Confirmation, an expression of the Church, a Community of the Spirit

The Apostolic Constitution of Pope Paul VI on the sacrament of Confirmation says: "From ancient times the conferring of the gifts of the Holy Spirit has been carried out in the Church with various rites. These rites underwent many changes in the East and the West while always keeping the significance of a conferring of the Holy Spirit." It may be useful, therefore to have a peep into the past history of the celebration of this sacrament before we begin to explain the rite.

6. History of the celebration of Confirmation

The Acts of the Apostles tell us clearly that after Baptism, there was the rite of imposition of hands performed by the Apostles in order to impart the gift of the Holy Spirit to the new members of the Church (Acts 8, 4-20; 19, 1-7). The Church has identified always this rite with the sacrament of Confirmation. In the beginning, therefore, this sacrament was celebrated by performing only the imposition of hands; there is no evidence of any anointing. But we find that already at the end of the second century, the rite of anointing was added to this sacrament as is evident from the writings of Theophilus of Antioch (about 181 A.D.): "We are called Christians because we are anointed with the oil of God".

At the beginning of the third century we find a very clearly drawn rite for the sacrament of Confirmation. We have its description in the Apostolic Tradition of Hyppolitus: "After the Baptism, which was generally performed near a stream, the baptised person entered the Church. The Bishop, then imposed his hands on him invoking on him the Holy Spirit. After that his head was anointed with the holy oil by the Bishop, his forehead was signed with the sign of the cross and he was given the kiss of peace".

In the middle ages, the rite of anointing acquired greater prominence. The rite of imposition of hands was united to the act of anointing in such a way that the anointing, the signing of the forehead and the imposition of the hands took place at the same time. This rite has remained in existence up to now in the Roman Church.

In the early Church the sacrament of Confirmation was celebrated together with Baptism. This showed better the close relationship that existed between the two sacraments. But from the 9th century onwards these two sacraments were separated. The main reason for this separation was the non-availability of the Bishop. In the early Church, the dioceses were small and therefore the Bishops could be present at every celebration of Baptism; it was very easy to confer the sacrament of Confirmation immediately after Baptism.

But in the middle ages, the Bishops were placed at the head of dioceses with large territories and it was not easy for them to be present at every Baptism. Hence the Baptized had to wait till the Bishop made his pastoral visit of the parish and in this way the sacrament of Confirmation was separated from the sacrament of Baptism. Gradually this separation was justified on theological grounds, explaining the sacrament of Confirmation as a sacrament of christian maturity and celebrating it at a later age. In the East, however, this sacrament is given together with Baptism even today. They do not require the Bishop as the celebrant; every priest is allowed to confer it on all those whom he baptizes. Still, the relationship of this sacrament to the Bishop is preserved in the East by using for this sacrament the oil that has been specially blessed by him for this purpose.

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II

THE NEW RITE OF CONFIRMATION

The New Rite of Confirmation

1. **The New Rite of Confirmation** published by the Sacred Congregation of Divine worship puts in relief the following aspects:

i) The sacrament of Confirmation is closely related to Baptism and therefore is one of the sacraments of initiation. In the celebration of the sacrament this idea must be stressed. The relationship of Confirmation with Baptism must be, therefore, brought out both during the preparation of this sacrament and during its celebration. At the time of preparation it is necessary to revive in the minds of the faithful the awareness of the Baptism which they received. Most of us received the sacrament of Baptism when we were children. Well, the occasion of receiving the sacrament of Confirmation is an appropriate moment to make a serious attempt to deepen the Baptismal relationship with Christ. Therefore the catechesis in preparation for this sacrament should take this into account.

During the celebration, the Baptismal promises are renewed. After the homily, the Bishop makes the candidates recall and renew the Commitment that they took upon themselves at Baptism and in this way they are made to realise that the sacrament of Confirmation makes their commitment deeper. They have to manifest the vitality of their christian vocation by bearing witness to Jesus Christ whose members they became through the sacrament of Confirmation.

ii) The sacrament of Confirmation is also related to the Eucharist. When we celebrate the Eucharist we re-enact the death and resurrection of Christ. We bear witness to our faith in the risen Lord. We show forth in this way that we are the disciples of Christ. In the sacrament of Confirmation we receive the Holy Spirit and it is in the power of this Spirit that we are able to make our act of witness more authentic. Hence with the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation, the christian becomes a full-fledged member of the Eucharistic community and

his participation of the Eucharist acquires greater meaning for his life of Christian commitment. The celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation during the Eucharist has the purpose of putting in evidence this close relationship of the sacrament of Confirmation with the Eucharist.

- iii) The Essential rite of the sacrament is made up of the anointing with chrism on the forehead, which is done by the laying on of the hand, and through the words: "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit".

2. Exposition of the Rite

Offices and ministries in the celebration of Confirmation.

- a) The responsibility for preparing the baptised for Confirmation rests with the whole people of God. In the case of adult catechumens, members of the local church should participate in the catechumenate and help prepare the catechumens for this sacrament. In the case of children, the responsibility lies primarily with the parents. Pastors have the duty to see that all the baptized come to the fulness of Christian initiation and are carefully prepared for Confirmation.
- b) The Celebration of Confirmation is an event in the local Church. The sacrament should be celebrated in a solemn and festive manner.
- c) Stress is laid on the role of the sponsor (god-parent), who is to bring the candidate, present him to the minister for anointing and later help him live up to his baptismal promises under the influence of the Holy Spirit.

A departure from the previous practice is seen in the recommendation that it is desirable that the sponsor for baptism should also be the sponsor for Confirmation, though the choice of a special sponsor is not ruled out. This brings out the relationship between Baptism and Confirmation. Even the parents may act as sponsors. The practice in the diocese in this matter is decided by the Bishop.

The qualities of the sponsor are outlined. He should be:

- i) Mature enough to fulfil his role;
- ii) A catholic, who himself, has received the sacraments of initiation;
- iii) Not forbidden by law to fulfil this mission

The minister of the sacrament is the Bishop. On Pentecost the Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles. It is through their ministry, therefore, the same Spirit is communicated to the other disciples. However, the Bishop can associate with him the other priests who are present for the celebration in the conferring of this sacrament, especially if the number of candidates for Confirmation is very large. Since the priests are constituted to be the helpers of the Bishops in the pastoral ministry of the Church, it is quite appropriate that they join with him in the celebration of this sacrament which is a sacrament of initiation of men into the Christian community. In case of adult Baptism, the priest who baptizes also immediately after Baptism confirms the newly baptized.

The celebration of the sacrament of Confirmation has a very great pastoral importance. The Bishop is the chief pastor of the diocese. He is the father of the diocesan family. The new members of the family are recognized by him as adult and capable of sharing his responsibility in the Kingdom of God. When he confirms them he explicitly acknowledges this. For the candidates for the sacrament this is the first official meeting with the Bishop. They should recognise him as their father and guide and should commit themselves to give him their generous collaboration in the realisation of the mission of Christ in the diocese.

- d) Others may also be ministers in special cases
- i) An administrator Apostolic, a Prelate or Abbot Nullius, a Vicar or Prefect Apostolic or a Vicar Capitular, within their territories. The priest who baptises an adult or a child of catechetical age or an adult whom he initiates into full communion with the church.
- ii) In danger of death, provided a bishop is not easily available or is lawfully impeded, pastors and parochial vicars; in their absence their parochial associates; priests who are in charge of special parishes; administrators; substitutes and assistants; and in the absence of all of the preceding, any priest not subject to canonical censure.

In case of necessity, for example, due to the large number to be confirmed, all the above may associate with the other priests in the administration of this sacrament but these priests must be:

- Vicars General, episcopal vicars or delegates, district or regional vicars or those who hold similar offices.
- Parish priests of the place where Confirmation is being given or of the candidates, or those who prepared them for the sacrament.

3. The celebration of the Sacrament

a) Priests who are associated with the chief celebrant impose hands with him on all the candidates, but they do not say the prayer.

b) The age of Confirmation: Adult catechumens and children baptised when old enough for catechesis should be admitted to Confirmation and the Eucharist at the same time they receive Baptism.

- i) Adults who were baptized in infancy should receive Confirmation and the Eucharist together.
- ii) In the Latin Church, Confirmation is given to children in about their seventh year. For pastoral reasons, the Bishops' Conference may defer to a more mature age. In danger of death, children may be confirmed before the age of reason.

c) Conditions for receiving Confirmation: The candidates must be:

- i) baptised
- ii) in the state of grace
- iii) well instructed and in a position to renew the promises of baptism
- iv) If the candidate is to be married and the above conditions cannot be fulfilled before the marriage, Confirmation should be deferred until after marriage.

d) Confirmation is usually celebrated within the Mass, to express more clearly the connection between this sacrament and the entire Christian initiation.

If the candidates are young children who are not going to make their first communion at this celebration, Confirmation should be given outside Mass.

The minister of Confirmation should celebrate or better, concelebrate the Mass with the priests who may join him in administering the sacrament.

If the Mass is celebrated by another, the Bishop should preside over the Liturgy of the word and give the final blessing.

The Liturgy of the word should be given importance in this celebration because through hearing God's word, the Spirit is given to the Church and its individual members. The recitation of the Lord's prayer by the newly confirmed with all the people is also of special importance, since it is the Spirit who prays within us, who makes us say "Abba", Father.

4. The Rite of Confirmation within Mass

The Liturgy of the Word is celebrated as usual, with readings either from the Mass of the day or from the texts listed for the Mass of Confirmation. There is a wide variety of these and there should be a homily to lead all present to a deeper understanding of the mystery of Confirmation. Such importance is attached to the homily on this occasion that an outline of a homily is given in the Rite itself, as a guideline for the Celebrant.

- a) After the Gospel the candidates are presented, each by his own name, unless there is a very large number.
- b) Then follows the homily as described above.
- c) Enlightened by the liturgy of the word and especially by the homily, the candidates are now invited to express their faith and renew their baptismal promises. In this act of faith all present should join.
- d) The Bishops and the priests who are to administer the sacrament with him impose hands on the candidates, the Bishop alone saying the prayer.
- e) The anointing with Chrism. The candidate is presented by the god-parent or parent who places his right hand on the candidate's shoulder and gives the name, or the candidate himself may give his name. The Bishop does the anointing and gives the sign of peace. This latter is a sign of paternal welcome on the part of the Bishop, not, as was previously understood, a blow on the cheek to remind the candidate of his obligation to fight the battles of the Lord.

- f) If priests help in administering the sacrament, they receive vessels of chrism from the Bishop. This, again, brings out the principal role of the Bishop.
- g) The Prayer of the Faithful asks for the grace needed by the candidates and all present to live up to their promises and to be witnesses to Christ by their spirit of unity with the Church.
- h) The Creed is omitted because of the profession of faith already made. The confirmed join in bringing the gifts, their first act as full members of the Church.
- i) There is a proper "Hanc igitur" and a special blessing is given at the end of the Mass.

5. Confirmation outside of Mass

As usual in every Liturgical action, the faithful are called into the assembly by an entrance rite. This consists of an entrance Song, greeting by the celebrant and an opening prayer.

The Liturgy of the Word proceeds and leads up to the Liturgy of the sacrament, as described above. The rest is as during the Mass, but after the prayer of the faithful, the Lord's Prayer is recited and the special blessing is imparted by the Bishop at the end.

Confirmation by an extraordinary minister is celebrated (as above) Confirmation in danger of death

The sick person not yet confirmed, should be strengthened by Confirmation before receiving Viaticum. Ordinarily, Confirmation and the Anointing of the sick are not to be conferred in a continuous rite.

The rite is celebrated as above, but if there is an urgent need, the minister lays his hands on the sick person and says the prayer. Then the anointing follows as usual.

In extreme necessity, the anointing alone is sufficient, with the usual form of words.

Further reflection on the ceremonies and prayers of the new rite of Confirmation will help us towards a better understanding of the role of the Holy Spirit in building and guiding the Church. Personal meditation on them will show us how the rites and words "express more clearly the holy things which they signify". It will also help fulfil the wish expressed in the Constitution on the liturgy (Vat. II) that "the Christian People.....should be able to understand them with ease and take full and active part in the celebration as a community".

6. Explanation of the main rites of Confirmation

a) Laying on of the hand:

It communicates a blessing (Deut. 34, 9); it also signifies the transmission of an office. In Confirmation this blessing and consecration is in view of a mission as can be seen from the prayer that is said at the beginning of the rite. The invocation of the Holy Spirit of the seven gifts recalls the Pentecostal event when the apostles were given the transforming presence of the Spirit and with it the mission of bearing witness to Christ. The act of imposing the hands symbolizes the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

It is given through the church to all those who accept the message of Christ in Baptism. So every Confirmation is a renewal of Pentecost in the life of the individual Christian. Just as the apostles after receiving the Spirit became powerful in their proclamation of the message of Christ, the Christian who receives the sacrament of Confirmation becomes a powerful witness to the Gospel.

b) Anointing of the forehead with oil:

In the Old Testament, oil was used for anointing the kings, prophets and priests. It is a symbol of strength, joy and grace. It is also the symbol of the Holy Spirit. Christ is the "Anointed One" par excellence because He was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 10, 38). In the sacrament of Confirmation, it signifies three things:

—It perfects Baptism. The spiritual organism received at Baptism acquires a new vigour by the reception of this

sacrament. The Christian is ready for action for the sake of Christ.

—It prepares him for a life of witnessing. He is expected to spread the good odour of Christ around him.

—It makes the Christian active in his mission of prophet, priest and apostle. He has to proclaim the Word of God courageously as the prophets did; he will have to live the Word of God like Christ and the Apostles who gave their lives for the Word of God; he will have to spread the power of the Word into the lives of men, by working for the expansion of the kingdom of God in this world.

c) Signing with the sign of the cross on the forehead:

It is a seal and as such it is the sign of belonging to Christ. At Confirmation the Christian receives the Spirit of Christ; hence he belongs from then on in a particular way to Christ. Since it is the seal of the Christ who died and rose from the dead, he will express his belonging by manifesting in his life the death and resurrection of Christ. His life will be a daily death to evil and daily rising to new life in Christ.

We take three texts from St. Paul to explain the meaning of this seal (2 Cor. 1, 21; Eph. 1, 13; 4, 30). From these texts we can conclude the following:

- i) The seal is the Holy Spirit
- ii) It is placed on the property of God
- iii) It has a relation to something in the future
- iv) It is something interior.

d) The form of the sacrament: "Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit": At Confirmation we acquire a special personal relationship with Christ. Those words of Christ promising the Spirit are fulfilled in his life: 'If any man is thirsty, let him come to me! Let the man come and drink who believes in me'. As scripture says: "From his breast shall flow fountains of living water" (John 7, 37-38). Hence what we receive at Confirmation is not merely some gifts of the Holy Spirit, but His very person. He transforms all our qualities by His presence and activity in us, and in this way all these qualities which we have, become charisms that contribute to the building up of the kingdom of God.

III

THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THE SACRAMENTS OF BAPTISM AND CONFIRMATION

1. Baptism in Water and Baptism in the Spirit:

i) Scriptural data

- a) In the New Testament the word Baptism is not restricted to indicate the sign of water; it is the participation in the redemptive plan of God (Mk. 10, 38; Lk. 12, 50).
- b) In the practice of the early Church the word 'Baptism' is referred to as 'baptism of the water' and 'baptism of the spirit' (Tit. 3, 5; 1 Cor. 12, 12; Acts 8, 26-39; Acts 2, 38-41; Acts 11, 15-16).
- c) In the apostolic practice, 'Baptism in Water' and 'Baptism in the Spirit' are signified by different actions: the former by the immersion in water and the latter by the imposition of hands (Acts 8, 14-17; Acts, 19, 1-7).

ii) **Comments:** The community of christians is the community of the disciples of Christ. Baptism makes them enter into this discipleship (Mk. 10, 38). There are two phases in the process of constituting this discipleship: the death, resurrection and Pentecost.

—The event of Christ and the event of His Spirit are the two foundation events of this community.

—The death and resurrection of Christ is symbolically expressed at Baptism. The Pentecost is re-enacted at Confirmation with the imposition of hands.

Thus every christian in the course of his life experiences these two events through the sacrament of Baptism and Confirmation.

We might say that Baptism of water is a treaty which establishes an alliance and the Baptism of the Spirit is the signature and seal which guarantees its execution, and protects it against any violation (Eph. 1, 13-14; 4, 30).

2. At Baptism we receive the Spirit of sonship; at Confirmation, the prophetic Spirit:

At Baptism the great stress is on the forgiveness of sin, while at Confirmation we receive the Spirit that was manifested at the Pentecost, which is a prophetic Spirit: the signs of the presence of the spirit, which is indicated through wind, tongues of fire and ecstatic speech reveal the prophetic character. In the Old Testament, the prophetic books speak of a double gift of the Spirit of God: the spirit as inner principle of sanctification and the Spirit as principle of prophetic force investing lives and actions with super-human power.

- a) This happened to Christ: at Incarnation: Lk. 1, 35.
: at Baptism.
- b) This is given to Christians: John 3,5
: Mt. 10,18-20; Lk.24, 48ff. Acts, 1,8.

3. The distinction based on the trinitarian perspective:

Baptism: is the seal of the Spirit of the Son incarnate for our salvation, which the Father gives us by adopting us.

Confirmation: is the seal of the spirit of the Father which the Lord Jesus gives to his Church. He received it from the Father. In the power of the Spirit He offered up his human life and rose again gloriously and returned to the Father (Cfr. Phil. 2, 6-11); He now communicates this same spirit to us as He did to the Apostles on the day of Pentecost thus:

Baptism makes us **fili in filio** (Sons in the Son)

Confirmation makes us **fili Dei in virtute** (Sons in power)

Our initiation is into the Trinitarian life:

At Baptism we receive salvation in Christ

At Confirmation we receive salvation in the Spirit

At the Eucharist our communion with the Father in the Son through the Spirit is established (Cfr. Doxology of the Mass).

4. The distinction based on liturgical perspective:

- a) Baptism is the encounter with the death and resurrection of Christ in water; Confirmation is the outpour-

ing of the Holy Spirit through the imposition of the hands.

- b) In Baptism the action of the Holy spirit consists in giving efficacy to the material sign (water) that it may effect what is signified. In Confirmation, the action of the Holy Spirit is on the person of the baptized.
- c) In Baptism we sink into the death of Christ, in order to be freed from our allegiance to the old Adam. In Confirmation, we receive the power to plunge anew every day by faith into the death and resurrection of Christ.

5. Distinction based on ecclesial perspectives:

In Baptism we are incorporated into the Body of Christ by transit into the death and resurrection of the Lord. In Confirmation we are anointed by the Spirit in order that we may grow into full Christ. The Spirit safeguards, enlightens and protects and daily consecrates our life in Christ.

6. Effects of the Sacrament of Confirmation

- a) Confirmation makes the christian life received at Baptism become dynamic. It makes the Christian vocation active. The inner principles of sanctification which was received at Baptism is developed. This development manifests itself in the following ways:
 - i) The baptised Christian receives an apostolic mission, He is called to make his personal baptismal reality acquire a communitarian dimension.
 - ii) He becomes a witness to the death and resurrection of Christ. To be a witness means to manifest in our lives the death and resurrection, to proclaim the Gospel of the risen Lord with our lives. It is possible only through the help of the Spirit.
- b) Confirmation gives us also charisms. The christian has to contribute to the growth of the Church by making use of the charisms that he possesses "By the sacrament of Confirmation their bond of union with the Church is made more perfect; they are endowed with a special strength of the Holy Spirit, and are thus more

strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed as true witnesses of Christ" (Lumen Gentium no. 11). The ordinary qualities which we possess are transformed into effective instruments by the Holy Spirit in order to build up the Church. In the early Church these charisms were manifested in an extraordinary manner; today it is manifested in the ordinary life of the Church. But in both cases it is the Holy Spirit that acts in the christian. The sacrament of Confirmation gives the Spirit for this purpose.

- c) It makes our faith mature. It makes us arrive at Christian adulthood. Faith is an act of personal relationship. The confirmed christian is capable of personal relationship which enables him to take his place in the community in a responsible manner. He also manifests his maturity of faith by re-enacting in his life the conflict between the evil and the good as in the case of Christ. The sacrament of Confirmation is a great source of strength in the battle.
- d) Confirmation gives character. It perfects the Baptismal character. It makes the christian become a greater sharer in the priesthood of Christ. It is in virtue of this character that he is able to participate actively in the Eucharistic celebration as well as in the other liturgical actions. It is for this that the Church demands the reception of the sacrament of Confirmation before receiving the other sacraments like Holy Order and Matrimony.

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IV CATECHESIS OF CONFIRMATION

We have seen from our theology of Confirmation and its relationship with the sacrament of Baptism:

- a) that it is an outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the seal or the completion of Baptism (the liturgical perspective).
- b) that it is the giving of the Spirit 'from on high', the Spirit of God, diametrically opposed to all that is 'world', that is, the power of the evil one (The Christological and trinitarian perspective).

1) The defects in our catechesis on Confirmation

- a) Confirmation is often presented as a sacrament that makes us soldiers of Christ.
- b) Confirmation is considered as springboard for the long treatment of apostolic responsibilities.
- c) Too much emphasis was placed on the person to be confirmed rather than on the Person of the Spirit.
- d) There was an improper emphasis on the adulthood of the christian.
- e) The sacrament of Confirmation was dissociated from the Initiation Rites of the Christian.

2) Some useful elements for catechesis on Confirmation

The argument that the soldier of Christ must know fully the faith that he is going to defend and thus should not be confirmed unless he shows sufficient knowledge of the content of catechism is not a valid one. It is enough that he be sufficiently instructed in order to know the meaning of the sacrament.

- a) The close relationship that exists between this sacrament and the sacraments of Baptism and the Eucharist should be made clear.
 - i) Regarding Baptism: Confirmation perfects Baptism (Cfr. above):

—Confirmation leads the Christian to a life of witnessing.

ii) Regarding the Eucharist: Eucharist as the act of witnessing.

—Confirmation makes the christian become an effective member of the Church.

—Eucharist as the exercise of the full membership in the Church.

b) Because in this sacrament the Holy Spirit is given in a special manner, something of the personality of the Holy Spirit should be presented in our catechesis.

c) The rite of Confirmation must be explained:

—The Bishop should be presented as the pastor of the community.

—The imposition of the hands and its significance as the renewal of Pentecost must be explained.

—The anointing, as the seal of Baptism. The symbolism of oil.

—The stroke on the cheek should be explained as a sign of peace and welcome offered to the candidate by the Bishop into the apostolic community of the local church.

d) The relationship of Confirmation with the Apostolate:

i) The gift of the Spirit deepens the human personality; at Confirmation the Spirit takes us out of ourselves in the act of bearing witness. We become 'for others'.

ii) Being an act of fellowship with the Holy Spirit, it perfects and transforms our human fellowship by deepening our personality. As a consequence:

—We become capable of meeting others, understanding others and thus manifesting that we have entered the age of the Spirit: 'Love one another as I have loved you'. This love is the Holy Spirit. It is out of the heart of such a fellowship meeting with one another in depth around Jesus that the Spirit of God can spring forth like 'fountain of living water' transforming the human fellowship into a fellowship in the Holy Spirit. .

- The Spirit makes this company flow like a river; He does not allow them to become a pious clique. They must be reaching out into the society around them, listening, interpreting, serving, reconciling etc.
- In such a fellowship of christians transformed into the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, prayer is a natural expression.
- e) With Confirmation each one lives a personal experience of the Spirit.

3. Preparations for the celebration of the Sacrament:

- a) Some themes for a series of preparatory celebrations during the weeks and days that precede the celebration of the Sacrament:
- Pentecost as a Harvest feast.
 - The Spirit and Nature, the Old and the New Law.
 - Sealing for Eternal Life
 - Witness.
- b) It can prove very useful to take children to the Baptistry and conduct Bible services or other prayer sessions around the Baptismal font as a preparation for Confirmation. This can help to deepen their awareness of Baptism which they received in their infancy and which they are going to perfect by receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Conclusion:

The Sacrament of Confirmation is an indispensable element in our Christian life. It is necessary to make our lives genuinely Christian, or better Christ-like. Often we should pray the Holy Spirit to re-awaken in us the grace of Confirmation so that we may always lead a genuine life in the Spirit, that is, a life of dedicated and sacrificing love.

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